A NEW ANTHOLOGY OF POEMS

For
XI-XII

Published by:
JADEED BOOK DEPOT
Urdu Bazar, Lahor.
for
PUNJAB TEXT-BOOK BOARD, LAHORE

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PREFACE

The pieces included in this selection are by modern poets. The aim is to provide students with models of contemporary expression in English, together with an over view of what the world is going through today Some students might argue that authors like Hardy and Lawrence hardly qualify to called "Modern", and, of course, a precise definition of the term is impossible But the recent past has a bearing on the present, just as the present will define parameters for the immediate future.

English literature some times predicates frames of experience which seems remote for young Pakistani's today. However, good literature in any language contains universal elements for the discerning reader. They are no really difficult poems in this selection. It is hoped that both teachers and students will find them entertaining and useful.

Three poems by Pakistan poets have been include. We are confident that you will find them as good as the others in every way.

RIAZ HASSAN

CONTENTS

			Page
1.	Flannan Isle ...	*W.W. Gibson* ...	1
2.	The Ice-Cart ...	*W.W. Gibson* ...	6
3.	The Owl Critic ...	*J.T. Fields* ...	9
4.	The Ad-dressing of Cats ...	*Thomas S. Eliot* ...	13
5.	The Subalterns ...	*Thomas Hardy* ...	16
6.	The Man He Killed	*Thomas Hardy* ...	18
7.	The War-Song of the Saracens ...	*J. Elroy Flecker* ...	20
8.	The Great Newspaper Editor to His Subordinate ...	*D.H. Lawrence* ...	22
9.	Law ...	*D.H. Lawrence* ...	24
10.	The Castle ...	*Edwin Muir* ...	26
11.	Barter ...	*Sara Teasdale* ...	28
12.	The Trees in the Garden ...	*S. Crane* ...	29
13.	Prayer before Birth	*L. MacNeice* ...	31
14.	Ducks ...	*Taufiq Rafat* ...	33
15.	Across the Indus ...	*Shahid Hosain* ...	35
16.	The Express ...	*S. Spender* ...	37
17.	An Old Woman of the Roads ...	*Padriac Colum* ...	40
18.	Time, Gentlemen, Time.	*O. St. John Gogarty* ...	42

19.	Young and Old ...	*Charles Kingsley* ...	45
20.	Everyone Sang ...	*Siegfried Sasson*	47
21.	The Seal Boy ...	*George Barker* ...	49
22.	The Watchers ...	*Lord Dunsany* ...	51
23.	Life and Death ...	*Mumtaz Shahnawaz*	53

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

FLANNAN ISLE

"Though three men dwell on Flannan Isle
To keep the lamp alight,
As we steer'd under the lea, we caught
No glimmer through the night!"

A passing ship at dawn had brought
The news; and quickly we set sail,
To find out what strange thing might ail
The keepers of the deep sea light.

The winter day broke blue and bright,
With glancing sun and glancing spray,
As o'er the swell our boat made way,
As gallant as a gull in flight.

But, as we near'd the lonely isle;
And look'd up at the naked height;
And saw the lighthouse towering white
With blinded lantern, that all night
Had never shot a spark
Of comfort through the dark,
So ghostly in the cold sunlight
It seem'd, that we were struck the while
With wonder all too dread for words.

And, as into the tiny creek
We stole beneath the hanging crag,
We saw three queer, black, ugly birds—
Too big, by far, in my belief,
For guillemot or shag—

Like seamen sitting bolt-upright
Upon a half-tide reef:
But, as we near'd, they plunged from sight
Without a sound, or spurt of white.

And still too, 'mazed to speak,
We landed; and made fast the boat;
And climb'd the track in single file,
Each wishing he was safe afloat,
On any sea however far,
So it be far from Flannan Isle:
And still we seem'd to climb and climb,
As though we'd lost all count of time,
And so must climb for evermore.
Yet, all too soon, we reached the door—
The black sun-blister'd lighthouse-door
That gaped for us ajar.

As on the threshold for a spell
We paused, we seemed to breathe the smell
Of limewash and of tar,
Familiar as our daily breath,
As though 'twere some strange scent of death;
And so yet wondering side by side
We stood a moment still tongue-tied,
And each with black foreboding eyed
To door ere we should fling it wide
To leave the sunlight for the gloom:
Till, plucking courage up, at last
Hard on each other's heels we passed
Into the living-room.

Yet as we crowded through the door
We only saw a tables pread
For dinner, meat and cheese and bread

But all untouched and no one there;
As though when they sat down to eat,
Ere they could even taste,
Alarm had come and they in haste
Had risen and left the bread and meat,
For at the table head a chair
Lay tumbled on the floor.

We listended, but we only heard
The feeble chirping of a bird
That starved upon its perch;
And, listening still, without a word
We set about our hopeless search.
We hunted high, we hunted low,
And soon ransacked the empty house;
Then o'er the Island to and fro
We ranged to listen and to look
In every cranny, cleft or nook
That might have hid a bird or mouse:
But though we searched from shore to shore
We found no sign in any place,
And soon again stood face to face
Before the gaping door,
And stole into the room once more
As frightened children steal.
Aye, though we hunted high and low
And hunted everywhere
Of the three men's fate we found no trace
Of any kind in any place
But a door ajar and an untouched meal
And an overtoppled chair.

And as we listened in the gloom
Of that forsaken living-room—

A chill clutch on our breath—
We thought how ill-chance came to all
Who kept the Flannan Light,
And how the rock had been the death
Of many a likely lad—
How six had come to a sudden end
And three had gone stark mad,
And one, whom we'd all known as friend,
Had leapt from the lantern one still night
And fallen dead by the lighthouse wall—
And long we thought
On the three we sought,
And of what might yet befall.

Like curs a glance has brought to heel
We listened, flinching there,
And looked and looked on the untouched meal
And the overtoppled chair.

We seemed to stand for an endless while,
Though still no word was said,
Three men alive on Flannan Isle
Who thought on three men dead.

—*W. W. Gibson*

NOTES

W. W. Gibson (1878-1956) was one of the leaders of the Georgian group of poets who revolted against the tradition of Tennyson, preferring to write about ordinary things and people. He was called 'the poet of the industrial poor'.

This poem tells the tale of the mysterious disappearance of three men, so powerfully, as to convey an atmosphere of horror

Flannan is the name of a group of small uninhabited islands in the Outer Hebrides off the coast of Scotland.

under the lee—on the side sheltered from the wind.
news—news that the lighthouse light is out.
ail—trouble, afflict.
glancing—flashing.
guillemot—large, long-necked sea-bird.
shag—the crested cormorant, a voracious sea-bird.
bolt-upright—quite upright.
half-ride—becoming visible halfway between low and high tide.
'mazed—amazed.
made fast—tied up.
gaped . . . . ajar—stood partly open.
spell—moment.
as though...death—another sign of something supernatural.
tongue-tied—silent.
foreboding—a feeling of approaching evil.
hard...heels—close behind each other.
perch—rod used as a bird's resting place in a cage.
ransacked—searched thoroughly.
ranged—moved about or walked or went all about.
cranny —hole.
cleft—opening.
overtoppled—overturned.
A chill. . .breath—while a cold chill in our blood seemed to catch us by the throat and stop our breathing.
likely—promising.
curs—pye-dogs
flinching—drawing back from something dangerous or painful.

THE ICE-CART

Perched on my city office-stool
I watched with envy while a cool
And lucky carter handled ice.....
And I was wandering in a trice
Far from the grey and grimy heat
Of that intolerable street
O er sapphire-berg and emerald floe
Beneath the still, cold ruby glow
Bewildered by the queer half-light,
Of everlasting Polar-night,
Until I stumbled unawares
Upon a creek where big white bears
Plunged headlong down with flourished heels,
And floundered after shining seals
Through shivering seas of blinding blue.
And, as I watched them, ere I knew,
I'd stripped and I was swimming too
Among the seal-pack, young and hale,
And thrusting on with threshing tail,
With twist and twirl and sudden leap
Through crackling ice and salty deep,
Diving and doubling with my kind,
Until at last we left behind
Those big white blundering bulks of death,
And lay at length with panting breath
Upon a far untravelled floe
Beneath a gentle drift of snow—
Snow drifting gently fine and white
Out of the endless Polar night,
Falling and falling evermore

Upon that far untravelled shore,
Till I was buried fathoms deep
Beneath that cold white drifting sleep—
Sleep drifting deep,
Deep drifting sleep.... ...
The carter cracked a sudden whip :
I clutched my stool with startled grip,
Awakening to the grimy heat
Of that intolerable street.

—*W. W. Gibson*

NOTES

A clerk sits in his office on a hot summer's day and watches a man with an ice-cart in the street. The clerk falls into a day-dream and imagines himself in the Arctic where everything is romantic and adventurous and the ice is the colour of precious jewels. He meets some polar bears and swims with some seals through the ice. He swims on and rests himself on an ice floe. The snow falls and he drifts on until suddenly the carter cracks his whip and the clerk is back in his office again on a hot summer's day.

in a trice—in an instant.
grimy—very dirty.
sapphireberg—iceberg of the colour of sapphires (a sapphire is a clear, bright blue precious stone).
floe—a sheet of ice floating on the sea.
creek—a narrow inlet of water.
flourished heels—the polar bears plunge straight down into the water and their heels wave on the surface as they go down.
floundered—plunged about in a stumbling way.
blinding—dazzling.
hale—strong and healthy.

threshing tail—their tail striking the water.
hind—i e. seals (kind here means family, race).
big. . . . .death—the large icebergs that can crush the seals.
Beneath. . . .sleep—note how the repetition gives a combined picture of the snow falling, of the floe drifting and sleep.

THE OWL CRITIC

'Who stuffed that white owl?' No-one spoke in the shop;
The barber was busy and he couldn't stop;
The customers, waiting their turns, were reading
The Daily, *the Herald*, *the Post*, little heeding
The young man who blurted out such a blunt question;
No-one raised a head, or even made a suggestion;
And the barber kept on shaving.

'Don't you see, Mr Brown?'
Cried the youth, with a frown,
'How wrong the whole thing is,
How preposterous each wing is,
How flattened the head is, how jammed down the neck is—
In short, the whole owl, what an ignorant wreck 'tis!
I make no apology;
I've learned owl ecology.
I've passed days and nights in a hundred collections,
And cannot be blinded to any deflections
Arising from unskilful fingers that fail
To stuff a bird right, from his beak to his tail.
Mister Brown! Mister Brown!
Do take that bird down,
Or you'll soon be the laughing stock all over town!'

And the barber kept on shaving.
'I've *studied* owls,
And other night fowls,
And I tell you
What I know to be true;
An owl cannot roost
With his limbs so unloosed;
No owl in this world
Ever had his claws curled,
Ever had his legs slanted,
Ever had his bill canted,
Ever had his neck screwed
Into that attitude.
He can't *do* it, because
'Tis against all bird-laws.
Anatomy teaches,
Ornithology preaches,
An owl has a toe
That *can't* turn out so!
I've made the white owl my study for years,
And to see such a job almost moves me to tears!
Mr Brown, I'm amazed
You should be so gone crazed
As to put up a bird
In that posture absurd!
To look at that owl really brings on a dizziness!
The man who stuffed him don't half know his business!
And the barber kept on shaving.
'With some sawdust and bark
I could stuff in the dark
An owl better than that,

I could make an old hat
Look more like an owl
Than that horrid fowl,
Stuck up there so stiff like a side of coarse leather.
In fact, about him there's not one natural feather.'
Examine those eyes
I'm filled with surprise
Taxidermist should pass
Off on you such poor glass;
So unnatural they seem
They'd make Audubon scream,
And John Burroughs laugh
To encounter such chaff;
Do take that bird down;
Have him stuffed again, Brown!
And the barber kept on shaving.

Just then, with a wink and a sly normal lurch,
The owl, very *gravely*, got down from his perch,
Walked around, and regarded his fault-finding critic
(Who thought he was stuffed) with a glance analytic,
And then fairly hooted, as if he should say:
'Your learning's at fault this time, anyway;
Don't waste it again on a live bird, I pray.
I'm an owl; you're another. Sir Critic, good day!'
And the barber kept on shaving.

—*J. T. Fields*

NOTES

The poem makes fun of a bad critic who while sitting in a

barber's shop waiting for his turn looks at something which he thinks to be a stuffed owl. In loud tones, he starts criticizing the stuffed owl (as he thinks it to be). What he believes to be an owl-like thing in fact turns out to be a real owl later on.

preposterous—completely against sense and reason ; absurd.
deflection—action of being bent aside.
canted—turned upside down.
Anatomy—science of structure of the body.
Ornithology—science of observation of birds.
Taxidermist—one whose trade is to stuff animals and birds.
Audubon—an American ornithologist.
Burroughs—an American naturalist.
bill—beak
lurch—sudden roll to one side.

THE AD-DRESSING OF CATS

You've read of several kinds of Cat,
  And my opinion now is that
  You should need no interpreter
  To understand their character,
You now have learned enough to see
That cats are much like you and me
  And other people whom we find
  Possessed of various types of mind.
For some are sane and some are mad
And some are good and some are bad
  And some are better, some are worse—
  But all may be described in verse.
You've seen them both at work and games,
And learnt about their proper names,
  Their habits and their habitat:
  But
  How would you ad-dress a Cat?
So first, your memory I'll jog,
And say: A CAT IS NOT A DOG.

  Now dogs pretend they like to fight;
  They often bark, more seldom bite;
But yet a Dog is, on the whole,
What you would call a simple soul.

  Of course I'm not including Pekes,
  And such fantastic canine freaks.

The usual Dog about the Town
Is much inclined to play the clown

And far from showing too much pride
Is frequently undignified.
He's very easily taken in—
Just chuck him underneath the chin
Or slap his back or shake his paw,
And he will gambol and guffaw.
He's such an easy-going lout,
He'll answer any hail or shout.

Again I must remind you that
A Dog's a Dog—A CAT'S A CAT.

With Cats, some say, one rule is true:
Don't speak till you are spoken to.
Myself, I do not hold with that—
I say, you should ad-dress a Cat.
But always keep in mind that he
Resents familiarity.
I bow, and taking off my hat,
Ad-dress him in this form: O CAT!
But if he is the Cat next door,
Whom I have often met before
(He comes to see me in my flat)
I greet him with an OOPSA CAT!
I think I've heard them call him James—
But we've not got so far as names.

Before a Cat will condescend
To treat you as a trusted friend,
Some little token of esteem
Is needed, like a dish of cream;
And you might now and then supply
Some caviare, or Strassburg Pie,
Some potted grouse, or salmon paste—
He's sure to have his personal taste.

(I know a Cat, who makes a habit
Of eating nothing else but rabbit,
And when he's finished, licks his paws
So's not to waste the onion sauce.)
A Cat's entitled to expect
These evidences of respect.
And so in time you reach your aim,
And finally call him by his NAME.

So this is this, and that is that;
And there's how you AD-DRESS A CAT.

—*T.S. Eliot*

NOTES

T.S. Eliot (1888—1963), a poet and critic, was born in U.S.A. but did most of his important writings in England. He was perhaps the most influential writer in recent times, whose theories and methods have helped *to* change poetry into what it is now-a-days. He is a Nobel Prize winner.

There are all kinds of cats and all kinds of dogs, yet as a class they have some common features. The dog is sociable and you can easily make friends with it. Pat it on the back or chuck it under the chin and it wags its tail and starts licking your hands or feet. The cat is more standoffish; it stands on its dignity and has to be wooed with a dish of cream or other similar delicacies.

habitat—natural home of animals or plants.
memory...jog—shake one's memory, recall.
Pekes—Pekinese dogs, small Chinese dogs.
freaks—results of a whim or prank on the part of nature.
guffaw—loud laughter.
lout—awkward fellow; compared with the polished cat the dog is no better than a lout.
caviare—salted eggs.
licks...sauce—licks the paws clean so that no particle of sauce is left.

THE SUBALTERNS

I

'Poor wanderer,' said the leaden sky,
'I fain would lighten thee,
But there are laws in force on high
Which say it must not be.'

II

——'I would not freeze thee, shorn one,' cried
The North, 'knew I but how
To warm my breath, to slack my stride;
But I am ruled as thou.'

III

——'To-morrow I attack thee, wight,'
Said Sickness. 'Yet I swear
I bear thy little ark no spite,
But am bid enter there.'

IV

——'Come hither, Son,' I heard Death say;
'I did not will a grave
Should end thy pilgrimage to-day,
But I, too, am a slave!'

V

We smiled upon each other then,
And life to me had less
Of that fell look it wore ere when
They owned their passiveness.

—Thomas Hardy

NOTES

Thomas Hardy (1840—1928) is better known as a novelist. He was deeply rooted in the countryside and its people. He is a latter-day nature poet with a strong awareness of man's position within the natural order. He received many distinctions and was also awarded the Order of Merit.

We are often inclined to think that Sickness, Cold, Death and other evils of life take pleasure in inflicting pain on us. The poet argues that these are passive agents, or subalterns, in the hands of a mysterious power above and beyond them. The realization of this fact takes the sting out of human suffering and we are able to face life stoically.

Subalterns—a subaltern is a junior officer in the army below the rank of captain.
leaden—the sky seems as heavy as lead, i.e. it is dull and heavy, and there is no sun
fain—(archaic) gladly.
lighten—give light to.
shorn—to be shorn is literally to have one's hair cut off, or of a sheep to have its wool chopped off. Hence it comes to mean naked, defenceless.
The North—the North wind.
slack my stride—lessen my speed.
wight—this is an old word meaning someone who is poor and wretched.
ark—the Ark was the large floating vessel in which Noah was saved during the Flood ; here it means 'body'.
fell—fierce, cruel.
They passiveness—They admitttd that they were helpless.

THE MAN HE KILLED

Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

I shot him dead because——
Because he was my foe.
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

He thought he'd 'list, perhaps
Off-hand-like——just as I——
Was out of work——had sold his traps——
No other reason why.

Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.

—*Thomas Hardy*

NOTES

In '*The Man He Killed*', the speaker is a soldier, the occasion his having been in battle and killed a man—obviously for the first time in his life. He is not a career soldier. He is enlisted

only because he is out of work. He is a working man. He speaks simple and colloquial English (*nipperkin*, 'list, *off-hand-like*, *traps*) and he has sold the tools of his trade. He is a friendly, kindly soul and will gladly lend a friend half-a-crown when he has it. He has known what it is to be poor.In any other circumstances he would have been horrified at taking a human life He has been given pause, and is trying to figure it out. But he is not a deep thinker and thinks he had supplied a reason when he has only supplied a name: *"I killed the man because he was my foe."* Even the speaker is left unsatisfied by the answer, though he is not analytic enough to know what is wrong with it.

The central purpose of this poem is quite clear : it is to make us realize clearly the irrationality of war, the fundamental irrationality which makes men kill those to whom they might in different circumstances show considerable kindness.

wet . . nipperkin—drink many half-pint cups of beer.
off-hand-like—without much thought.
traps—tools.

WAR SONG OF THE SARACENS

We are they who come faster than fate : we are they
who ride early or late :
We storm at your ivory gate : Pale Kings of the
Sunset. beware !
Not on silk nor in samite we lie, nor in curtained
solemnity die
Among women who chatter and cry, and children
who mumble a prayer.
But we sleep by the ropes of the camp, and we rise
with a shout, and we tramp
With the sun or the moon for a lamp, and the spray
of the wind in our hair.

From the lands, where the elephants are, to the forts
of Merou and Balghar,
Our steel we have brought and our star to shine on
the ruins of Rum.
We have marched from the Indus to Spain, and by
God we will go there again ;
We have stood on the shore of the plain where the
Waters of Destiny boom.
A mart of destruction we made at Jalula where men
were afraid,
For death was a difficult trade, and the sword was
a broker of doom ;

And the Spear was a Desert Physician who cured
not a few of ambition,
And drave not a few to perdition with medicine
bitter and strong :

And the shield was a grief to the fool and as bright
as a desolate pool.
And as straight as the rock of Stamboul when their
cavalry thundered along :
For the coward was drowned with the brave when
our battle sheered up like a wave
And the dead to the desert we gave, and the glory
to God in our song.

—James Elroy Flecker

NOTES

James Elroy Flecker (1884—1915) who, like Keats, died of consumption at an early age, was interested in creating beauty. He derives some of his inspiration from oriental themes.

The thundering rhythm of the poem fully suits the grand theme—savage scorn for the weak who die in curtained beds, mighty vigour of attack, harsh strength of purpose, and the glorious exultation in victory.

Saracens—Arabs or Muslims.

pale. . .sunset—kings of the west who are afraid of the Saracens.

samite—fabric of silk interwoven with gold.

curtained solemnity—in a solemn way in curtained rooms, unlike the Saracens who die in the battlefield.

mumble—speak indistinctly, pray on behalf of the sick or the dying person.

Jalula—in Persia where Yazdejird, king of Persia, was defeated by the Arabs during Hazrat Omar's caliphate.

For death . . . doom—in trade we need a broker or middleman and in the trade of death the sword is the broker or the deciding factor.

Spear . . . ambition—the spear of the Saracens put an end to the ambition of their opponents.

was a grief—brought grief.

sheered up—moved away, rose.

THE GREAT NEWSPAPER EDITOR TO HIS SUBORDINATE

'Mr Smith, Mr Smith,
haven't I told you to take the pith
and marrow and substance out of all
the articles passing beneath your scrawl ?

And now look here what you've gone and done !
You've told them that life isn't really much fun,
when you know that they've got to think that
they're happy,

as happy as happy. Oh, so happy, you sappy.
Think of the effect on Miss Harrison
when she reads that her life isn't really much fun.
She'll take off her specs and she'll put down the paper
as if it was giving off poison vapour.

And she'll avoid it ; she'll go and order
The Morning Smile, sure, that it will afford her
comfort and cheer, sure that it will tell her
she's a marvellous, delicious, high-spirited feller.

You must chop up each article, make it papy
and easy to swallow ; always tell them they're happy,
suggest that they're spicy, yet how pure they are,
and what a sense of true humour they've got, ha-ha ?

Mr Smith, Mr Smith,
have you still to learn that pith
and marrow and substance are sure to be
indigestible to Miss Ponsonby !

Mr Smith, Mr Smith,
consider Miss Wilks, or depart forthwith.
For the British Public, once more be it said,
is summed up in a nice, narrow-gutted old maid.' 28

—D.H. Lawrence

NOTES

D.H. Lawrence (1885—1930) was a novelist and poet who believed in the superiority of natural living over artificial living. His poetry is sensitive and energetic.

According to the poet, the British reading public has no aptitude for thought and the journalist who wishes to make his mark would do well not to force it to think. Secondly he must confirm them in their self-esteem, and he must not give them anything that goes against their cherished views about themselves.

pith and marrow—the essential part.
scrawl—to write.
sappy—energetic, vigorous—slang use meaning: foolish, silly.
feller—slang for fellow.
papy—soft and easy to digest.

LAW

Law, say the gardeners, is the sun,
Law is the one
All gardeners obey
To-morrow, yesterday, to-day.

Law is the wisdom of the old
The impotent grandfathers shrilly scold;
The grandchildren put out a treble tongue,
Law is the senses of the young.

Law, says the priest with a priestly look,
Expounding to an unpriestly people,
Law is the words in my priestly book,
Law is my pulpit and my steeple.

Law, says the judge as he looks down his nose,
Speaking clearly and most severely,
Law is as I've told you before,
Law is as you know I suppose,
Law is but let me explain it once more,
Law is The Law.

Yet law-abiding scholars write;
Law is neither wrong nor right,
Law is only crimes
Punished by places and by times,
Law is the clothes men wear
Anytime, anywhere,
Law is Good morning and Good night.

Others say, Law is our Fate;
Others say, Law is our State;

Others say, others say
Law is no more
Law has gone away.

And always the loud angry crowd
Very angry and very loud
Law is We,
And always the soft idiot softly Me.

—*D. H. Lawrence*

NOTES

This poem is a fine example of the light treatment of a very serious subject. We are all agreed that there exists what we call law, but while defining it we arrive at conclusions comfortable to our circumstances and pre-dispositions.

The impotent grand fathers—petulant old men who have had their day.
treble—shrill.
put out—shows their insolence, their defiance of authority.
pulpit and steeple—these stand for the church.
Law . . . God night—Law is another name for customs, traditions and forms.
soft—silly. The bumptious indentifies the law with itself.
State—probably a reference to fascism. Fascism saw the State as a master which the individual should serve.

THE CASTLE

All through that summer at ease we lay,
And daily from the turret wall
We watched the mowers in the hay
And the enemy half a mile away,
They seemed no threat to us at all.

For what, we thought, had we to fear
With our arms and provender, load on load
Our towering battlements, tier on tier,
And friendly allies drawing near
On every leafy summer road.

Our gates were strong, our walls were thick,
So smooth and high, no man could win
A foothold there, no clever trick
Could take us, have us dead or quick.
Only a bird could have got in.

What could they offer us for bait?
Our captain was brave and we were true . . .
There was a little private gate,
A little wicked wicket gate.
The wizened warder let them through.

Oh then our maze of tunnelled stone
Grew thin and treacherous as air,
The cause was lost without a groan,
The famous citadel overthrown,
And all its secret galleries bare.

How can this shameful tale be told?
I will maintain until my death
We could do nothing, being sold;
Our only enemy was gold,
And we had no arms to fight it with.

—*Edwin Muir*

NOTES

Edwin Muir (1887-1959), poet, novelist and critic, was a man of broad sympathies and wide-ranging interests. His life was characterised by considerable nobility.

The poem may be read as an allegory. On one level it is a straightforward story of treachery during the siege of an impregnable castle. On another level it can be applied to the life of a person or a nation whose integrity is undermined by the insidious greed of money.

provender—food for human beings.
quick—alive.
wizened—of shrivelled or dried up appearance.
maze—labyrinth; complicated passage in which one is likely to lose one's way

BARTER

Life has loveliness to sell,
All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
Soaring fire that sways and sings,
And children's faces looking up,
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,
Music like a curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And for your spirit's still delight,
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,
Buy it and never count the cost;
For one white singing hour of peace
Count many a year of strife well lost,
And for a breath of ecstasy
Give all you have been, or could be.

—*Sara Teasdale*

NOTES

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933), an American poetess, is noted for her excellent lyrical verse. Her own life was unhappy and stormy.

For the poet, beauty is of such a supreme value that any conflicting demand should be sacrificed to it. "Spend all you have for loveliness", she says, "buy it and never count the cost, and for a breath of ecstasy give all you have been or could be."

Holding . . .cup—greatly surprised, amazed.

curve of gold—the curve refers to the bright waves of music.

thoughts . . .night—thoughts that make the night beautiful.

THE TREES IN THE GARDEN

The trees in the garden rained flowers.
Children ran there joyously.
They gathered the flowers
Each to himself.
Now there were some
Who gathered great heaps—
Having opportunity and skill—
Until, behold, only chance blossoms
Remained for the feeble.
Then a little spindling tutor
Ran importantly to the father, crying:
"Pray, come hither!
See this unjust thing in your garden!"
But when the father had surveyed,
He admonished the tutor;
"Not so, small sage:
This thing is just.
For, look you,
Are not they who possess the flowers
Stronger, bolder, shrewder
Than they who have none?
Why should the strong—
The beautiful strong—
Why should they not have the flowers?"
Upon reflection, the tutor bowed to the ground,
"My Lord," he said,
"The stars are displaced
By this towering wisdom."

—Stephen Crane

NOTES

Stephen Crane (1871-1900), an American poet and war correspondent, was a man of prolific output whose genius was cut short by tuberculosis. He is best remembered for his novel, *"The Red Badge of Courage."*

This poem is an allegory in the form of a satire, and to know what it means we have to know what the garden, the flowers, the children, the tutor and the father stand for. There may be more than one answer to these. It appears that the garden stands for the world, the flowers for worldly goods, the children for men and women, the father for the old feudal order and the tutor who rejects it as unjust. But it is not easy to know which way the writer's sympathies lie. The tutor is described as a little spindling who runs self-importantly to the father. Obviously the description is not sympathetic and we feel that the father is right in thinking that they owe what they possess to their diligence and enterprise. But the concentrated irony of the tutor's last remarks shows that it is he who has the last world.

spindling — slender.
admonished — reprimanded, took to task.
Ran importantly — thinking a lot of himself.

PRAYER BEFORE BIRTH

I am not yet born; O hear me.
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the clubfooted ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born; console me
I fear that human race may with tall walls wall me, with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me, on black racks rack me, in bloodbaths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light in the back of my mind to guide me.

* * *

I am not yet born; O fill me
With strength against those who would freeze my humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton, would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with one face, a thing, and against all those who would dissipate my entirety, would blow me like thistledown hither and thither or hither and thither like water held in the hands would spill me.
Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.
Otherwise kill me.

—Louis MacNeice

NOTES

Louis MacNeice (1907-) is an Irish poet belonging to the school of Auden and Spender, and exhibiting some of the same qualities of satire and irony.

This is a very moving cry from a child not yet born. It is very much a 'modern' poem, set against the background of a rich, modern state, in which man may become a part of a huge machine at the mercy of advertizers and newspapers. "Preserve me from all these", says the unborn child, "give me clear water, green grass and a blue sky—otherwise let me not be born at all."

Let me—A reference to all the supernatural terrors which can frighten a small child.

stoat—a small fierce animal found mainly in Western Europe.

clubfooted—with a foot that is deformed.

ghoul—an evil spirit that robs graves and feeds on the flesh of the dead.

dope—drug, stupefy.

lure—tempt, entice.

racks—the rack was an instrument of torture, consisting of a frame with rollers to which a person's wrists and ankles were tied so that his body was stretched when the rollers were turned.

dandle—usually used of a mother soothing a child. Here used in the sense of water soothing the child.

dragoon—force into.

lethal—bringing death.

automaton—a person whose actions have become quite mechanical like a machine.

dissipate—waste foolishly.

entirety—everything I am, my personality.

thistledown—the thistle is a wild plant with prickly leaves; thistledown is the light fluff of the thistle flowers, carrying the seed.

DUCKS

The ducks, bent like a boomerang,
Hurtle across the sky
To a swampy exile in Pakistan;
And like a boomerang they return
When winter is over
To the dark recesses of Siberia.
There they sit, sunning themselves,
On bare little islands—in the river.
With heads tucked inside their wings,
As if nothing mattered.
The hired man floats downstream pushing
An empty boat in front of him,
And is now quite close.
At the right moment he shows himself.
The birds rise noisily in panic
And head for the tall grass hiding us.
We carefully place our shots
Among the confusion of brahmani, teal,
Pintail and mallard.
Five birds turn suddenly limp,
And are lowered by an invisible rope
Straight down to the guarded river.
The survivors wheel sharply left
(We guessed they would)
Making a bee-line for the sights
Of the second party behind the ridge.
We lean back in contentment to see
Two, three, four brahmani dangle
From the unceremonious sky.

——*Taufiq Rafat*

NOTES

Taufiq Rafat (1927—) is a Pakistani poet and playwright. His poems have appeared in Australia and America.

'*Ducks*" is a good example of his poetry, and it has the additional merit of simplicity to commend it. The ducks, which are virtually our guests from Siberia, are welcomed by their hosts with gunshot. This is a good account of a duck hunt in Pakistan, containing everything which needs to be said.

boomerang—curved or V-shaped piece of carved handwood used by the aborigines of Australia as a hunting weapon. It is thrown at the game, and if it misses, returns to the hand of the thrower.

brahmani, teal, pintail, and mallard—types of ducks.

unceremonious—of course, the common use would have been as an adverb, qualifying 'dangle' but the poet has preferred to use it as an adjective qualifying 'sky'. This is a type of transference which is fairly common in poetry.

ACROSS THE INDUS

How beautiful it seems
That crowded, festering, insistent city,
Dirt, barren heat, the cruel drone of flies,
The sores paraded to indifferent eyes,
The ruined houses leaning to each other
Disgorging naked, unappealing children
Playing their games in self created filth.
And rising, waiting, casting its heavy mantle,
The suffocating, obliterating dust
Swirling forever in the noisy lanes.

But I have crossed the river
Placing the deep and easy flow of green
Between that life and this.
Clear and toylike in the distance
Quiet, pure and captivating
Lies the city; gracefully the houses
Jostle each other to the river's brink.
So the Indus mirrors
Those dirty shadows like a dream in crystal,
And the ugliness I saw and came away from
Along the placid water flows away.

—*Shahid Hosain*

NOTES

Shahid Hosain (1934—) is a Pakistani poet. He has been published abroad, and is known for his taste and discernment.

In '*Across the Indus*', he draws attention to the contrast between appearance and reality with regard to any Pakistani city which might be across the Indus. At close quarters it is shown to be dirty and unhygienic, but from a distance it looks beautiful.

festering—making unhealthy, corrupting.
Disgorging—throwing out, vomiting
Jostle—to rub or bump against each other, a condition caused by over-crowding.

THE EXPRESS

After the first powerful plain main manifesto
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,
The gasworks, and at last the heavy page
Of death, printed by gravestones in the cemetery.
Beyond the town there lies the open country
Where, gathering speed, she acquires mystery,
The luminous self-possession of ships on ocean.
It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low
Then loud, and at last with a jazzy madness—
The song of her whistle screaming at curves,
Of deafening tunnels, brakes, innumerable bolts.
And always light, aerial, underneath,
Goes the elate metre of her wheels.

Steaming through metal landscape on her lines,
She plunges new eras of wild happiness,
Where speed throws up strange shapes, broad curves
And parallels clean like the steel of guns.
At last, further than Edinburgh or Rome,
Beyond the crest of the world, she reaches night
Where only a low stream-line brightness
Of phosphorus on the tossing hills is light.
Ah, like a comet through flame, she moves entranced,

Wrapt in her music no bird song, no, nor bough
Breaking with honey buds, shall ever equal.

—*Stephen Spender*

NOTES

Stephen Spender (1909—), poet and critic, was associated with Auden, MacNeice and Day Lewis in writing '*new*' English poetry.

We are inclined to see beauty in old, immemorial scenes which are dear to our feelings and memories. Science, we are told, has disfigured the world. And yet the age of science has beauties of its own of which we are becoming dimly conscious. No doubt, green fields and mountains and rivers, windmills, a team of oxen ploughing the field make an instantaneous appeal to us; but trains and cars and aeroplanes touch our imagination quite as surely as objects of nature. Looked at from close quarters, the train may not seem to be a thing of beauty, associated as it is with hurrying, nervous crowds, the rough and tumble of crowded compartments, and the stifling atmosphere of railway stations. But let it once clear the railway station and it begins to shed its drab associations and acquires a strange beauty of its own. And when at last it has entered the open country it acquires the grace of a queen. Notice how the rushing lines and the thick-coming images reflect the speed and impetuous energy of the express.

After . . . pistons—the movement of the pistons is a clear indication that the train is about to start.

restrained unconcern—as though the train were a queen who remains deliberately aloof.

heavy . . . cemetery—tombs in the churchyard with their epitaphs.

jazzy madness—the noise of the train gets wilder and wilder like a jass-band.

elate metre—joyous music (metre means the rhythm of verse).
metal landscape—metal track.
comet—star-like body with a tail of light (moving across the sky).
entranced—carried away as in a dream with joy.

AN OLD WOMAN OF THE ROADS

O, to have a little house!
To own the hearth and stool and all!
The heaped-up sods upon the fire,
The pile of turf against the wall!

To have a clock with weights and chains
And pendulum swinging up and down!
A dresser filled with shining delph,
Speckled and white and blue and brown!

I could be busy all the day
Clearing and sweeping hearth and floor,
And fixing on their shelf again
My white and blue and speckled store!

I could be quiet there at night
Beside the fire and by myself,
Sure of a bed and loth to leave
The ticking clock and the shining delph!

Och! but I'm weary of mist and dark,
And roads where there's never a house nor bush,
And tired I am of bog and road,
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!

And I am praying to God on high,
And I am praying Him night and day,
For a little house—a house of my own—
Out of the wind's and the rain's way.

—Padraic Colum

NOTES

The old lady who is weary of mist and dark and bog and road and is feeling lonely prays to God that she may have a cosy little cottage of her own to keep her busy all the day, cleaning and sweeping, fixing her crockery on the shelf or sit listening to the ticking of the clock. Note how longingly she dwells on the details of what she would like to have—the clock with weights, and chains and pendulum and the colour scheme of the crockery.

hearth—floor of fireplace.
delph—here it means crockery.
white and blue and speckled store—colourful crockery
bog—wet, spongy place

TIME, GENTLEMEN, TIME

O would not Life be charming
  Could we get rid of clocks,
The still ones and alarming
  That break on sleep with shocks,

Then it would be respected
  And wortheir far of Man
Than when by springs directed
  From gold or a tin can.

Why should Man's life be reckoned
  By anything so queer
As that which splits the second
  But cannot tell the years?

If we got rid of watches
  The trains would cease to run,
We could not fight a battle ship
  Or aim a battle gun,

Nor tune the little engines
  Which fill the towns with fumes
And send men with a vengeance
  (Quite rightly) to their tombs.

If we got rid of watches
  And wanted to approach
The pallid peopled cities
  We'd have to hire a coach

And guard, who, to arouse us,
So hardy in the morn
Outside the licensed houses
Would blow a long bright horn.

Our stars know naught of watches,
There's not a wind that wists
Of mischief that Time hatches
When handcuffed to our wrists.

—Oliver St. John Gogarty

NOTES

Oliver St. John Gogarty (1878-1957) was a doctor and poet. He is witty in the manner we have come to expect from Irish men of letters. He lived an active, full life and had diverse interests.

Here are a series of highly amusing arguments for the abolition of clocks. The author says that they have enslaved us completely and if we could get rid of them there would be no more wars, trains would stop running, motor-cars would stop running people over. The stars don't need clocks; so why should men? Here we are all marching around at the mercy of little ticking machines. Let us throw away these things that drive men into mental homes and turn them into slaves. Let us instead measure seconds by the time it takes a bird to fly across a lane, minutes by the time it takes us to have a drink. He concludes by saying that the true measure of time is the human heart: the more it beats the greater is our joy in life.

Remember that this is only a humorous poem and as a grim antidote you could read the experiences of men who have actually lived without clocks, e.g. men in solitary confinement, or on a desert island. Life without clocks is not as pleasant as the author thinks.

In England some people meet their friends in a public house, and eat light snacks in a happy, cheerful atmosphere.

When closing time comes the manager calls out in a loud voice the traditional *'Time, Gentlemen, Please*!' The title of the poem is an allusion to this.

still ones—clocks without alarms.
alarming—clocks with a bell or buzzer that can be made to sound at whatever time one wishes.
it—life.
springs. . . .can—springs inside a gold watch or one made of tin.
reckoned—measured.
little engines—motor-cars.
fumes—smoke (from the cars exhaust pipes).
with a vengeance—to an unusual extent, in large numbers.
hardy—vigorous, strong.
licensed houses—an inn or an eating house authorized by license to sell intoxicating liquors.
naught—nothing.
wists—knows.
hatches—thinks up, creates.

YOUNG AND OLD

When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen;
Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away;
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog his day.

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown;
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down;
Creep home and take your place there,
The spent and maimed among;
God grant you find one face there,
You loved when all was young.

—Charles Kingsley

NOTES

Charles Kingsley (1819-75) is a novelist, historian and poet. He became a clergyman but was hardly suited to the profession because he was hot-tempered and impatient.

He had an optimistic outlook on life, as is evident from *Young and Old*, a poem written in a light, cheerful vein. The periods of youth and old age are brought out in contrast and the last two lines are like a hopeful prayer even for old age.

And every dog his day—even the lowly and humble have their moments of glory and achievement.

The spent and maimed among—Perhaps the only clumsy line in an otherwise easy-flowing poem. 'Among' should have come in the beginning of the line, but clearly the poet required a word to rhyme with 'young' in the last line.

EVERYONE SANG

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find their freedom
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on; on; and
out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted,
And beauty came like the setting sun.
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away . . .O but every one
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the
singing will never be done.

—Siegfried Sasson

NOTES

Siegfried Sassoon (1886—) a poet and novelist who served in World War I, found the experience so terrrible that it affected his temperament. He is a poet who looks for moments when human beings can be free from the horror which surrounds them.

Everyone Sang is an example which results from this quest. A group of people have expressed their oneness by bursting out into song in unison. The poet becomes suddenly happy with the realisation that perhaps all is not lost for the human race.

And prisoned birds must find their freedom—there are a few moments in the life of most people when they are liberated from the dull misery of their daily existence and the repetitive horror of war. But these few moments do much to reinstate our belief in mankind.

My heart was shaken with tears—these are tears of happiness In the same way as pain and pleasure are often bracketed together, laughter and tears sometimes go hand in hand.

Music is a psychological remedy for sorrow, and nothing can bring people into harmony with each other better than a community sing-song.

THE SEAL BOY

See he slips like insinuations
Into the waves and sidles
Across breakers, diving under
The greater tidals,

Plunging, a small plane
Down dark altitudes,
Trailing bubbles like aerial bombs
Or a balloon's broods.

O moving ecstatic boy
Sliding through the gloomy seas
Who bring me pearls to enjoy
Rarer than to be found in these seas—

Between the fixed bars of your lips
Darts the kiss like silver
Fish, and in my wild grip
You harbour, for ever.

—George Barker

NOTES

George Barker (1912-) is an occasional poet. "*The Seal Boy*" is straightforward in content, but there is a considerable richness of implication to be appreciated, especially in the last verse.

Insinuations—indirect suggestions; in this case doing something in a manner which disguises intentions.

breakers—large waves near the shore.
tidals—waves caused when one stream of water runs opposite to the direction of the tides.
Plunging—moving downwards, or into water.
ecstatic—exalted, transported by emotion.

THE WATCHERS

The world of old in its orbit moving
Chanced to pass (if there's chance at all)
Near to the path of two Spirits' roving,
Who stood and looked at the large green ball.

Morning flashed upon tusk and pinion.
Tooth and talon, of tribes at war.
'Who, we wonder, will win dominion?
Which will rule in the little star?'

Little scope there appeared for wonder;
The mammoth strode from the forest's dusk.
Who but he, with his hooves of thunder?
Who but he, with his lightning tusk?

Yet there seemed in his monstrous striding
Heaving weight and enormous ears,
Something gross. So, before deciding,
'Come again in a million years.'

Through the vault where the stars sprinkled
Ages passed from the world away.
All of that time Orion twinkled:
Nothing changed in the Milky Way.

Again they stood where the world was rolling,
Again they watched, and saw, this time, Man,
Heard the roar of his engines coaling,
Scanned his cities to guess his plan,

Peered through clouds that his smoke turned
sour,

Even spied on his hopes and fears.
'Yes,' they said, 'he has surely power.
But, come again in a million years.' 28

—Lord Dunsany

NOTES

Lord Dunsany (1878-1957) is a poet and playwright whose delicate writing stands in contrast with his athletic and soldierly interests. In fact writing was for him an occasional pastime.

Two imaginary spirits look down on the earth long ago. 'Who will rule it?' they wonder. The obvious choice seems the mammoth with its great tusks and huge size. But thay won't decide finally. 'Let us wait a million years before making up our minds.' they think. A million years go by. They look down again and see Man who now appears to be ruling the earth with his brain and his machines. 'Yes,' they say, 'he certainly seems to have power at the moment But, again let us wait a million years before deciding. Who knows if he will be powerful or even exist, then ?'

tusk—i.e. animals with tusks.
pinion—literally a bird's wing, hence birds.
tooth—i.e. flesh-eating animals.
talon—literally, the claw of a bird of prey, hence bird of prey.
mammoth—large kind of elephant with long curving tusks now extinct.
hooves of thunder—thundering hooves.
heaving weight—his huge bulky size which heaves as he moves.
gross—dull, too heavy.
Orion—a constellation.
the Milky Way—a broad, faintly luminous band seen across the night sky, consisting of innumerable stars.

LIFE AND DEATH

I lost myself playing hide and seek
Somewhere between
Today and yesterday
'Twas a game me thought
As children played
So in the labyrinthine ways
of hours and days
I strayed
I left a fragment of myself
Behind
in every hour
For we are dying all the time

Stranger, that glance from my looking-glass
With new and hostile eyes
Tomorrow, perchance tonight,
You will be gone
To join those million ghosts that were myself
Some faded hour who says we die a single death.

—*Mumtaz Shahnawaz*

NOTES

Mumtaz Shahnawaz was born on 14.10.1912. Matriculated at Queen Mary College, Lahore and graduated in Home Science from Lady Irwin College, Delhi, she began writing poetry in English at the age of 7 years and her first poem was printed in the Queen Mary College Magazine

Mumtaz went to England in 1930 when she accompanied her mother Begam Shahnawaz who attended the Round Table Conference. She was invited to dinner by the Poets Club, where she recited a number of her poems. She was only 17 years then and one of the well-known papers "*The Guardian*" accepted one of her poems and sent her a cheque for 3 Guineas.

Her poems were printed off and on in some of the magazines in India. She was often asked to recite her poems at functions. She died in an air crash in April 1948 while on her way to America to attend a United Nations meeting.

The poet says that she moves aimlessly in life like a child and passes her days and nights playing hide and seek, without any idea of her ultimate goal. All of a sudden she sees her reflection in the looking glass and the reality dawns upon her. She realises that soon, very soon, she would quit this world and join millions of other persons who came in this world and after a brief sojourn here, departed.

labyrinthine—irregular, complicated.
strayed—wandered or moved about aimlessly.
fragment—part.

THE END

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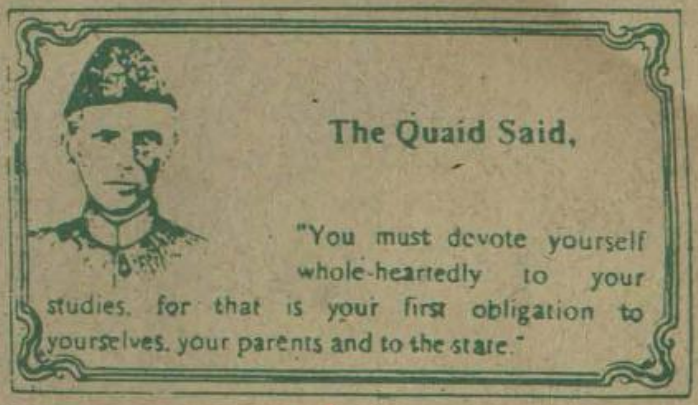
The Quaid Said,
"You must devote yourself whole-heartedly to your studies, for that is your first obligation to yourselves, your parents and to the state."

69

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